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Firm offers to clear park site toxic waste

BY NANCY MOFFETT
PARKS AND MUSEUMS REPORTER

Kerr-McGee Corp. has volunteered to clean up thorium at the mouth of the Chicago River, the site of the future Du Sable Park.

"Kerr-McGee has agreed to do the work. They said they're ready to go in October, November," said Ald. Burton Natarus (42nd).

The company, which did not introduce the thorium, is awaiting approval for its removal plan from the Chicago Park District and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said company spokeswoman Debbie Schramm. The EPA is reviewing the offer, said Fred Micke, the agency's on-scene coordinator.

Thorium, a metallic element

that occurs naturally, has been linked to cancer. The thorium in the 3.5-acre undeveloped park is in "three very distinct spots" and a foot or less deep, Micke said, adding that it would be dug up and removed.

Natarus worked with the city and EPA to make sure that people were kept informed after residents learned of it a couple of years ago.

The park is to be located south of Lake Point Tower on the north side of the river.

The cost will depend partly on how much removal work is needed, said Angelynne Amores, Park District spokeswoman.

The source of the thorium is thought to be Lindsay Light and Chemical, which used it in making gas mantles.